

January 31, 1973

SPEAKER: Read the amendments. Are the amendments extensive?

CLERK: ??, sir.

SPEAKER: Are the amendments--committee amendments? Very good. Senator Chambers, would you care to explain those amendments.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, the first amendment would be on Page 3, Line 27 and after the word "election" would be inserted this language ",and a resident in the city and district or any area annexed by the city for one year" and this particular amendment involves only the residency requirement prior to persons being able to file for council and since Omaha, on occasion, does annex additional territory, this would mean that any individual who lived in that annex portion long enough to qualify to run would be able to do so. The second amendment is on Page 12, Line 11, and this relates to the number required for a quorum of the council. Rather than six, there would be seven which would be a majority of the number of the council. So, I move for the adoption of the committee amendment.

SPEAKER: Is there need for further discussion of the committee amendments as explained by Senator Chambers. All those in favor of adopting the amendments, say aye. Those opposed, say no. So ordered. The amendments are adopted.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, to briefly explain the bill. The current City Council in Omaha consists of seven members and they are elected at large. This bill would change the number from seven to twelve. All twelve would be elected by district. To provide guide lines for adjoining district boundaries the first time around, the twelve legislative districts which fall mainly within the city of Omaha would provide those guide lines. The Douglas County Election Commissioner would have the responsibility to make adjustment, minimum adjustments,

(End of Belt #8)

(Start Belt #9)

as small an adjustment as possible in each district boundary to have twelve districts of roughly equal population. That would make about 30,000 people in each district, the same number as are represented in this legislature by each member of Legislature from Omaha. Now the reason for this bill, I should say the reasons for this bill are many. There are other individuals who will give comments about why the bill is needed but, in brief, I would like to say by way of starting it that there has been the type of heavy-handed pressure lobbying by the city which occurs on situations like this. Recently, the World Herald was going to take a poll to see how the Senators felt about this particular bill and the lobbyists for the city, Greg Stuve, called the World Herald reporter and asked him to stop taking this poll because it would put Senators in a position of having made a commitment which he probably would later try to persuade them not to honor. In addition to that, the mayor of the city of Omaha in concert with certain members of the city council want to now say place an issue similar to mine on the ballot for voting in the May election, but he has stated publicly in the newspaper that the purpose of placing this issue on the ballot now is to defeat this bill. If and when the Legislature would defeat this bill, he would do all he could to withdraw the proposal from the ballot so there would be no vote by the people. When I approached the council in June of last year, I said that I was coming to them as one public official to another to extend the courtesy that whereis as a state senator there was power in the Legislature to require the district election of council members in Omaha, I wanted them to have the opportunity to put the issue on a ballot so that the people could vote for it. The City Council refused flatly